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Rep. Thomas Massie slams colleagues for pushing federally sanctioned “antisemitism monitors” at universities

05/06/2024 // Belle Carter // **930** Views



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Kentucky Republican Representative Thomas Massie slammed his colleagues in Congress, Reps. Ritchie Torres (D-NY) and Mike Lawler (R-NY), for introducing hate speech laws to [outlaw criticism of Israel](#).

"Some of my colleagues are introducing legislation to create federally sanctioned 'antisemitism monitors' at colleges," Massie posted on X, formally known as Twitter. "I'll vote No." According to him, policing speech, religion and assembly is not the role of the federal government. "In fact, it's expressly prohibited by the U.S. Constitution," he added.

"There's a bipartisan effort in Congress to equate criticism of the secular state of Israel to violence toward Jewish people in America," the congressman said in a follow-up tweet. "The latter is illegal and the former is protected speech, but if a false equivalency is established, it will be forbidden to criticize Israel."



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pic.twitter.com/cv4BFzyigg

— Thomas Massie (@RepThomasMassie) [April 27, 2024](#)

Lawler and Torres authored a bill to monitor antisemitism on college campuses on Friday. The College Oversight and Legal Updates Mandating Bias Investigations and Accountability Act, or COLUMBIA Act, would allow the Department of Education (DoED) to hire a "[third-party antisemitism monitor](#)" for any college or university that receives federal funding, according to a press release. If a university does not comply, it may lose federal funding. The monitor would release a quarterly report, "evaluating in detail the progress that a college or university has made toward combating antisemitism on campus and issuing policy recommendations."

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The lawmakers crafted the said proposal as a "response to the ongoing demonstrations at [Columbia University](#) that have created an environment that many Jewish students view as hostile to their well-being and safety," according to the press release. "My office and I have spoken with countless Jewish students from campuses across America who feel deeply unsafe, purely as a result of their religious and ethnic identity," Torres said in the announcement. "This is a blatant violation of Title VI and the federal government cannot allow this to continue unchecked."

The college or university placed under DoED's "censorship" would be responsible for covering any expenses from the monitor's oversight and would lose federal funding for not complying with the COLUMBIA Act's requirements. "This past week's crisis at Columbia is not an isolated incident. It is the straw that has broken the camel's back and I am prepared to do something about it," Torres said in another statement. "Jewish students have told my office that they feel completely abandoned by their university administrators and they view Congress as the only avenue for accountability and safety. Let's honor our word to them and get this done." (Related: [Former free speech proponent Sen. Hawley is now calling for the national guard to suppress anti-Israel protests.](#))

Democrats demand Columbia U trustees "act" against anti-Israel protests, otherwise, resign

A group of 21 House Democrats, led by Reps. Josh Gottheimer and Dan Goldman of New York, warned the university's board in a letter that it must act decisively to [stop the ongoing anti-Israel demonstrations](#) one day before protesters shattered the windows of a campus building and barricaded themselves inside. The representatives said they were disappointed that the university has yet to disband the "unauthorized and impermissible encampment of anti-Israel, anti-Jewish activists on campus." The letter indicated that the demonstration on campus has prevented students from safely attending class and leaving their dorms, which the House Democrats stated is an ["apparent violation of Title VI"](#) of the Civil Rights Act.

According to them, the encampment is serving as a "breeding ground for antisemitic attacks against Jewish students."

"The First Amendment guarantees freedom of speech and assembly, but not freedom to harass and intimidate other students. Academic institutions must ensure the safety and security of all of their students under Title VI," the letter included. "It is clear to us that the University has allowed the encampment to create an environment that appears to violate its legal obligations to protect all students from discrimination and harassment," the House Democrats continued. "As a result, many students who are paying for an education –

supported by the federal government – cannot safely attend class, enter the library, or leave their dorm rooms."

Columbia University President Minouche Shafik disclosed in a Monday statement that the school would not divest from Israel but was in the process of negotiating with the protest organizers to reach a solution. The educational institution set a deadline of 2:00 p.m. on Monday for students to leave the encampment or face suspension.

"Those who violate the law cannot dictate the terms of the University's ability to comply with that law. It is past time for the University to act decisively, disband the encampment, and ensure the safety and security of all of its students," the letter stated, adding that trustees who are unwilling to act should resign.

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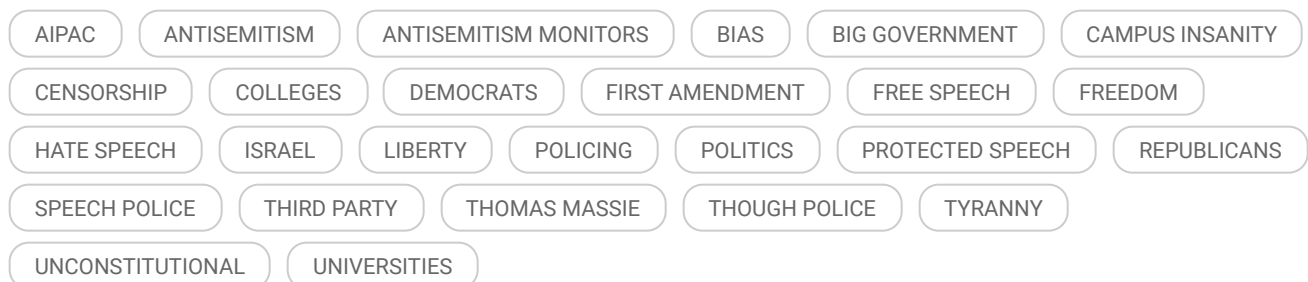
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